



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Mayor Heather Bond Somers, Councilors Dean G. Antipas, Bruce S. Flax, Bill Johnson, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Rita M. Schmidt, James L. Streeter, and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, June 19, 2012

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

SPECIAL MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Somers called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Somers, Councilor Antipas, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Watson
Members Absent: Councilor Flax and Councilor Johnson

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnayan.

3. NEW BUSINESS

2012-0169

Introduction of an Ordinance for Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger noted that staff has been working with the bond attorney, the City and Groton Long Point to develop the ordinance, but the full text of the ordinance is not yet available for Council action. The Town Manager distributed an e-mail from the bond attorney with a draft of the ordinance.

Councilor Johnson arrived at 6:09 p.m.

Roll Call: Members Present: Mayor Somers, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Johnson, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Watson
Members Absent: Councilor Flax

Discussed

The ordinance will include the dollar amount and apportionment to the Town, City and Groton Long Point, and will reference calendar years rather than fiscal years. The ordinance will also reference a separate document that will include the inputs from the three entities that identify the roads, time frames, and cost estimates. Those documents were provided to Councilors for their review. The Town Manager explained that there will be changes as priorities change over the years. On an annual basis around November or December, the City and Groton Long Point will have to submit a work plan for the upcoming year to the Town Council. The projects funded by the bond referendum would not appear in the Capital Improvement Program.

Councilor Streeter questioned the referendum schedule. The Town Manager noted the schedule will be very tight and action by the Council will be necessary on June 26th.

Mayor Somers asked the Council to review the documents and forward questions to the Town Manager prior to the meeting on June 26th.

2012-0171

Referral of Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Project to Planning Commission Under CGS 8-24

Not Discussed

2012-0170

Setting Public Hearing Date on an Ordinance for Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation

Not Discussed

2012-0132

Crystal Lake Road Operational and Safety Improvements**Discussed**

Gary Schneider, Director of Public Works, noted that a Public Information Meeting on the Crystal Lake Road Operational and Safety Improvements project was held on May 24th. A full update on the project was provided at that time. There were few residents in attendance. The questions and comments from the meeting are included in the information provided to the Council. The public comment period lasted until June 8th and two additional comments were received during that time. Mr. Schneider reviewed the funding schedule for the project.

Town Manager Oefinger read a communication he received from Bob Yust of the Sub Base in support of the project.

Councilor O'Beirne asked what the savings would be if the 10' wide trail were removed from the project. Mr. Schneider estimated \$400,000 for construction. Land acquisition costs are approximately \$900,000 but that includes land necessary for road widening as well as the path. Mr. Schneider reviewed specifics of the project. Councilor O'Beirne asked for the justification for the path and Mr. Schneider cited sections of the 2002 Plan of Conservation and Development. There are no figures available on the number of bikers or walkers in that area.

Councilor Watson noted that Steve Woodruff who owns property at the corner of Route 12 and Crystal Lake Road also supports the project.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Streeter, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

A motion was made by Councilor O'Beirne, seconded by Councilor Antipas, to amend the resolution to remove the multi-use trail from the project.

The Town Manager asked the Council to consider supporting the project as submitted. This area has been on the top of the list for many years for a bike trail. There are thousands of individuals at the Submarine Base who do not have transportation. The project has been supported by past and present commanders at the Submarine Base. Many plans have cited this as a needed and desirable improvement. He noted that the number of existing walkers and bikers is not relevant because the existing conditions are not conducive to those activities. The bike trail will be located on the south side of the road and will connect to the trail on Pleasant Valley Road South as part of an overall plan. The Town Manager views this as a tremendous opportunity to provide a trail where a significant portion of the cost is not falling on the local taxpayer.

Mr. Schneider noted that the cost to resurface Crystal Lake Road from Military Highway to Route 12 and redo the traffic signal is \$730,000. The cost to the Town under this proposal is \$558,210.

Councilor O'Beirne expressed concern that this project was discussed at the state and regional level before the Town Council signed off on the basic proposal.

The Town Manager explained that the project moved very quickly at the state level. Staff saw the plans just before bringing them to the Town Council. Councilor O'Beirne was provided with CIP project narratives going back to 2002 where the path was mentioned. Those discussions took place during budget deliberations and during a meeting with the Commanding Officer of the Submarine Base. This project started as a Town project to redesign Crystal Lake Road, not just resurface the road.

Councilor Antipas asked if the road would be considered for resurfacing under the pavement management program. Mr. Schneider stated that this road needs both structural and geometric improvements, as well as resurfacing. This project would be a major reconstruction project requiring a bond referendum.

Councilor Antipas asked what the likelihood is that the project would be cancelled if the path were eliminated. The Town Manager explained that at a minimum, the project would be pushed back a year. There is a June 30th deadline to capture the initial dollars for engineering.

The motion to amend failed by the following vote:

In favor: 2 - Councilor Antipas, Councilor O'Beirne

Opposed: 6 - Councilor Johnson, Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Schmidt, Mayor Somers, Councilor Streeter, Councilor Watson

The motion carried unanimously

2012-0196

Mystic Streetscape Project - Update

Discussed

The Town Manager noted that this item was placed on the agenda to update the Town Council on the project. The agenda did not note that this may be a potential executive session, so some topics may be discussed at a later time due to potential litigation. The contractor's bond company has been involved in recent discussions and the Mayor has been approached by business owners about possible litigation.

Town Manager Oefinger noted that work on the project is progressing and he noted some recent activity.

Town Attorney Eric Callahan agreed that it is not advisable to get into legal issues or strategies outside of executive session. He reiterated what the Town Manager had stated. The Town is not in total control of the project because of DOT involvement. The Town needs to continue to work with the contractor while protecting the Town's interests.

Rick Norris, project manager, noted significant work will be accomplished this week. The contractor has brought on another crew. Mr. Norris reviewed challenges faced including environmental issue (oils and lead) at Bank Square Books and a leaking electrical conduit that needs to be repaired. The next step is to remove electrical transformers and the wires going down West Main Street which involves electric, cable, and fire alarms. The state's drainage system is obsolete and has caused problems. Repairs to the drainage pipe are required and catch basins will be installed. Paving is scheduled for June 27th through 29th. Mr. Norris reviewed required work on the side roads. There is drainage work that will require West Main Street to be shut down for approximately five hours because of utilities in the road. An updated schedule from the contractor is expected at the Thursday bi-weekly progress meeting.

Councilor O'Beirne questioned the fire hydrant that has been located in the middle of a parking space. Mr. Norris stated it was put there by the water company because of other utilities in the way at the proposed location. The issue will be addressed later.

Councilor Streeter noted his concern for the merchants and expressed frustration that he does not really understand the issue and now the threat of litigation has limited discussion.

Michael Murphy, Director of Planning and Development Services, noted that all of these issues have been discussed with the merchants at Friday meetings. It is the contractor's responsibility to do the work and provide schedules. The Town has followed all of the proper procedures and steps have been taken to make sure that the contractor knows what is required.

Mr. Norris noted that the Town met with the contractor in December about scheduling, but did not receive anything from him until March. The Town has withheld money from the contractor. The contract completion date has always been June 30th and everyone is working hard to meet that

date.

Mayor Somers expressed appreciation to Mr. Norris and noted that he provides good updates at the merchants meetings.

With respect to road milling, work on West Main Street will start early Thursday morning. The contractor will work with the police to maintain one lane of alternating traffic. The goal is to open up parking as quick as possible.

2012-0199

Mystic Arts Center Parking Lot Lease

Discussed

Mayor Somers stated she had further discussions with a board member from the Mystic Arts Center in an attempt to refine the proposal to provide free parking in downtown Mystic during the streetscape project. Right now, the first half hour of parking at the lot is free. Mayor Somers proposed that the Mystic Arts Center continue to provide the first half hour for free, with the Town providing up to an additional 4½ hours. Any time spent at the lot over 5 hours would have to be paid by the patron. The Mystic Arts Center would provide the Town with a ticket count each week.

In response to Councilor O'Beirne, Mayor Somers noted that there is no ability to differentiate among the people using the parking lot.

Signage will be provided to promote the free parking.

Councilor Peruzzotti thanked everyone for their efforts to put together this proposal and include measurability."

Town Manager Oefinger reminded the Council that under the original scenario, \$50,000 would provide 44 days of free parking. Now the Town will be paying only for the hours used. The question becomes how much will it cost and how long should the Town run the program. The Town Manager would still recommend \$50,000 with the thought that the program would be evaluated after a few weeks. He suggested that the agreement include a beginning and end date.

The hourly parking rate at the lot is \$3.00. It would be the Town Manager's desire to have the agreement in place before paving. The agreement would include a weekly usage report provided by the Mystic Arts Center and the Town would be responsible for associated costs to implement the program. Discussion followed on signage, posters, and promotion of the program.

The Town Manager distributed a memo from Eileen Duggan noting that under the charter, the RTM has no role in determining how encumbrances are spent and neither does the Town Council. The Town Manager noted that this is a Town Council initiative and he would never spend encumbered funds in this amount without the Town Council's knowledge.

With respect to the appropriateness of the encumbrance, correspondence between Sal Pandolfo and the Town's auditor, Vanessa Rossitto, indicates it is an appropriate use for encumbered funds.

Councilor O'Beirne raised the issue because the Board of Education was cited by the auditor for the same practice. Town Manager Oefinger noted that the rules associated with encumbrances change all the time. These are legacy encumbered funds. What is being described by Councilor O'Beirne cannot happen going forward. Under the current policy, all encumbrances will be associated with a valid contract and there will no longer be legacy dollars available.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Antipas, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 7 - Mayor Somers, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Watson
Abstain: 1 - Councilor O'Beirne, Jr.

4. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Antipas, to adjourn the meeting at 7:28 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.